

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received

date entered

## 1. Name

historic Merritt "Dad" Violette House

and/or common

## 2. Location

street &amp; number

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Florida \_\_\_ vicinity of #8 - Hon. Harold Volkmer

state Missouri code 29 county Monroe code 137

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial
___ structure	___ both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	___ educational
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	___ military
			___ museum
			___ park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			___ religious
			___ scientific
			___ transportation
			___ other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name 1. Mr. &amp; Mrs. Delbert Hartley

street &amp; number 31 Luther

city, town Hannibal \_\_\_ vicinity of state Missouri 63401

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street &amp; number Monroe County Courthouse

city, town Paris state Missouri 65273

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1. Cannon Reservoir Archaeological Project has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes \_\_\_ nodate 1976-1977 ☒ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District

210 N. 12th Street

St. Louis

state Missouri 63101

## 7. Description

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☒ moved date 1981

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Merritt "Dad" Violette House in Florida, Missouri, is a one-story frame structure. Although its exterior details are conventional Queen Anne vernacular, it is strikingly original in plan. Threatened by construction of the Clarence Cannon Dam, the house has been moved to higher ground by its present owners.

The house has three bays on the main facade, five bays on the sidewalls, and five bays on the rear wall. The primary exterior wall material is wood clapboards. Overlapping shaped shingles run in bands below the windows, as a frieze below the cornice, and in the gable ends.

Each gable has small square decorative windows, the only access into the separated attic space above the side walls. The roof of the porch on the front facade is supported by two tapered wooden columns of the Doric order which are supported in turn by parapets. Above the front porch are three adjoining double-hung windows with nine small stained glass panes over one. Above these stained glass windows the main gable slopes forming an overhang or hipped roof protecting the decorative swags and windows below. The roof line at this point has a plain cornice return. The side gables form simple monumental pediments flanking the central decorative hipped roof-area.

Window structural openings are flat with plainsills. All windows in the main house are double hung with single-paned sash except two in the dining room wall. And they are long vertical casements flanking a single double-hung central window.

Roof shingles were originally wood, but are now asphalt. There is a simple boxed cornice. The front main door is centrally located and the only exterior doors are two symmetrically placed, flanking the center rear room, opening to the back of the house onto an open porch. The main door structural openings are square with plain moldings. One-light transoms are above each exterior door opening. The doors are of the single leafed, paneled with decorative details below and with single lights above. Hardware from the R. L. Company was used for all the doors. Door knobs were of black ceramic material and locks were of brass.

In plan, the house can be called a cross in square. The recessed foyer opens into a center hall that is twelve feet wide, thirty feet long and eighteen feet high, lighted by the clerestory windows that appear as dormers over the front door and at the rear of the house. The wall opposite the door centers on a large ornamental fireplace. This space served the Violettes for parties and community meetings. Other rooms have ten foot ceilings.

Immediately to the left and right of the entrance way were bedrooms with closets, each having its own fireplace. Off the central part of the hallway wide double doors led to the arms of the cross: the main dining room on the left (north) and the main parlor room to the right (south), each with fireplaces. Doors from the dining area led to a pantry into the kitchen and a cloak hallway. On the right next to the main parlor (which was used by the Violettes as a bedroom) was a small library. To the back of the house was a smoking room with fireplace; this room reserved for the men at parties. All the main rooms had fireplaces, three double fireplaces in all. The two back rooms each had a small flue built for the use of stoves.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates constructed** 1902-1903 **Builder/Architect** John Hensey, John Jones/Mrs. M. A. Violette

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Merritt "Dad" Violette House is significant as the home of a man who contributed greatly to the development of this area of the state; who saved Mark Twain's birthplace for the nation and instigated the Mark Twain State Park; and who built two camps for the Camp Fire Girls at his own expense. Architecturally, the house is one of the few turn-of-the-century houses in the area, constructed from an original design and by a woman.

Merritt Alexander Violette, Junior was born in Florida, Missouri, February 18, 1849.<sup>1</sup> His father was a native of the Alsace-Lorraine-region of France and fled to the United States during the French Revolution. His mother, the former Eliza Damrell (1821-1908) was the daughter of Edmund Damrell, a Kentuckian who had settled in Florida soon after its founding in 1831. Among other early families who expected the town to prosper through navigation of the Salt River was that of John Marshall Clemens and his son Samuel was born there in 1835. The Clemens family moved to Hannibal in 1839 and M. A. Violette, Jr., never knew them, the but recollections of his mother enabled her to identify the birthplace cabin in 1907, when Mark Twain's biographer Albert Bigelow Paine visited Florida.

At that time, the small house was occupied, but by about 1910 it began to be neglected. Violette purchased it in 1915, moved in across the street, and took steps to restore it. In 1924 he sold most of the land included in the Mark Twain Memorial Park. The Park was given to the state in August of that year and the house the following February, but not until 1930 was the house moved to the park site.

Too young to join the Confederates during the Civil War as he would have liked, Merritt Violette delivered newspapers from Mexico, Missouri, to Florida, and later carried the mail between Florida and Paris on what he called a "mouse colored mule".<sup>2</sup> In 1864 he became a clerk in Mexico and shortly thereafter in Sturgeon, Missouri. Thirty years later he moved to Linn, Missouri, to attend to a business he had started earlier, supplying ties to the railroads. This work was profitable, but too strenuous for his health and in 1902 he returned to Florida. There he farmed (hybrid corn and Black Angus cattle) and operated a general store in partnership with his son and another partner. After 1915, the business was advertised as "M. A. Violette and Son".

The house, begun in the fall of 1902 and completed the following year, was designed by Mrs. Violette. She was the former Annie D. Root of Jamesport, Daviess County, Missouri. The daughter of Rev. D. H. Root, she had been a teacher of art and languages at Howard Payne College in Fayette before her marriage in 1879. Her design was exceptionally rigorous even for professionally designed buildings of the period in its symmetry, balanced proportions and contrasting volumes. The house was constructed by John Hensey and John Jones, both of Florida and was reported to have cost \$6,000. Mrs. Violette died in 1913.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Gregory, Ralph. M. A. "Dad" Violette, A Life Sketch. Florida, MO: 1969.
2. Hunt, Karen Platz. "Historic Resources Survey Report." University of Nebraska: Cannon Reservoir Human Ecology Project, 1977.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Florida, MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	5	6	0	4	4	8	0	4	3	7	2	0	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification Lot 2, Block 1, Sec. 3, Township 54N, Range 8W of the 5th Principal Meridian of the town of Florida, MO.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen Platz Hunt, Historical Archaeologist

organization Cannon Reservoir Archaeological Project date August 1, 1977

street & number University of Nebraska telephone

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

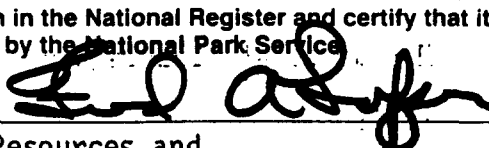
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



Director, Department of Natural Resources and  
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 1

2. Mr. & Mrs. Orland Yates  
3935 McMasters Avenue  
Hannibal

Missouri 63401

Item number 6

Page 1

2. Historic American Building Survey (Mo. 1205)  
1978-1979  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington

federal

D.C. 20243

Item number 9

Page 1

3. The Perry (Missouri) Enterprise, "'Dad' Violette Dies at Florida", Vol. 44,  
(Feb. 5, 1931).

Item number 11

Page 1

2. Esley Hamilton  
Hannibal Arts Council  
625A Broadway  
Hannibal

March 30, 1981  
314/221-6545

Missouri 63401

3. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Survey & Registration  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks & Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City

March 22, 1983  
314/751-4096

Missouri 65102

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

Each double fireplace, bearing wall and flue is underlaid with limestone rock foundation, quarried to the southeast of the house across South Fork, and pulled on a skid to the site by two large black horses.<sup>1</sup>

The interior walls and ceilings were all finished with plaster and lath and papered. The interior floors are of narrow pine boards. All windows have the same design elements featuring corner decorations with circle designs above and below the main casing. The doors have the same design elements as the windows except that the lower ends have decorative base moldings matching the baseboards. All single doors opening into the main hallway have single-pane transoms above.

The dining room and parlor room (Violette's bedroom) had matching mantels over the fireplaces, complete with fancy glazed tile. Simple mantels were used in the two bedrooms and smoking room. The hallway mantel is more ornate, sporting free-standing fluted columns, shelves and a large beveled glass mirror. The dining room fireplace was constructed with an iron grill for burning coal. This fireplace and those found in the hallway and parlor were ornamented with ceramic tile facings and hearth.

The pantry opening off the kitchen and dining room was lined with china cabinets above and shelving below. Directly across the hallway was the library with large hand-built bookcases.

Only a few minor alterations have been made to the house. A door was cut from the kitchen area into the smoking room and a bathroom was inserted into the library circa 1952.

The house was originally sited about 200 yards northeast of its present location, on a ridge overlooking the valley of the Salt River. Nearby to the south of the house were an Indian Mound and the Pollard family cemetery, which remained from an earlier property owner.<sup>2</sup> The house was moved in November, 1981 by Leslie Hauptgraver Moving Company. As a part of the Memorandum of Agreement for the mitigation of cultural resources to be adversely impacted by the Cannon Reservoir Corps of Engineers Project, the Violette House was slated for demolition. In preparation for this event the building was recorded by the Historic American Buildings by means of measured drawings, photographs and data sheets. The present owners literally acquired this building from the farmer who had acquired salvage rights to demolish it. The owners moved the house to as near as practical to the original one, a lot in the possession of the present owners some two hundred yards from the original location, and closer to the small community of Florida. The house was given the same geographical orientation, its rear facing the same valley (now a reservoir pool) that it originally had. It is the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer that the property in its present location fulfills National Register Guidelines for moved properties numbers 1, 2, and 3 and therefore remains eligible for consideration to the Register despite its being moved.

The present owners are currently refurbishing the house, whose original fabric remains largely intact. They plan to use it for a vacation/retirement home.

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National Park Service**

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MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

FOOTNOTES

1. According to Julius Garrelts, RFD, Stoutsville, MO interviewed 1977. Mr. Garrelts farmed the Violette land for several years with M. A. Violette and knew him well.
2. Mrs. Austin Phillips, Augusta, Kansas, grand-niece of M. A. Violette, interviewed in 1977.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE

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Page 1

Violette's association with the Camp Fire Girls began in 1915 and 1916, when he built a log club-house on the South Fork of the Salt River near the old "Bybee" or "Utterback" ford. He opened it to campers free of charge, and the Moberly Camp Fire Girls were among the first to use it. In 1920, he built a second site, a campground and shelters at the top of the hill on the road leading into Florida from the south. The "Hilltop Camp" was in the development of the Mark Twain Park in 1924, but over the years hundreds of girls used the two camps and learned to call Mr. Violette "Dad", the cognomen by which he was best known in his later years.

Even in the last year of his life, "Dad" was working to improve Florida; contracts for the paving of Highway 107 were let in the fall of 1930, and work was stopped in his memory on February 1, 1931, the day of his funeral. More than a thousand persons were present at that event. It was agreed that Florida and the state were deeply indebted to him.

"Dad" deeded his house to his son, Dan, and Dan at his death in 1957, bequeathed it to Ruth Richart.<sup>3</sup> The executors of the Ruth Richart estate, in 1973, sold it to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who were then preparing the Clarence Cannon Dam. In 1980, the Corps sold the house to the present owners on the condition that they move it to a site above the level of the lake to be formed by the dam.

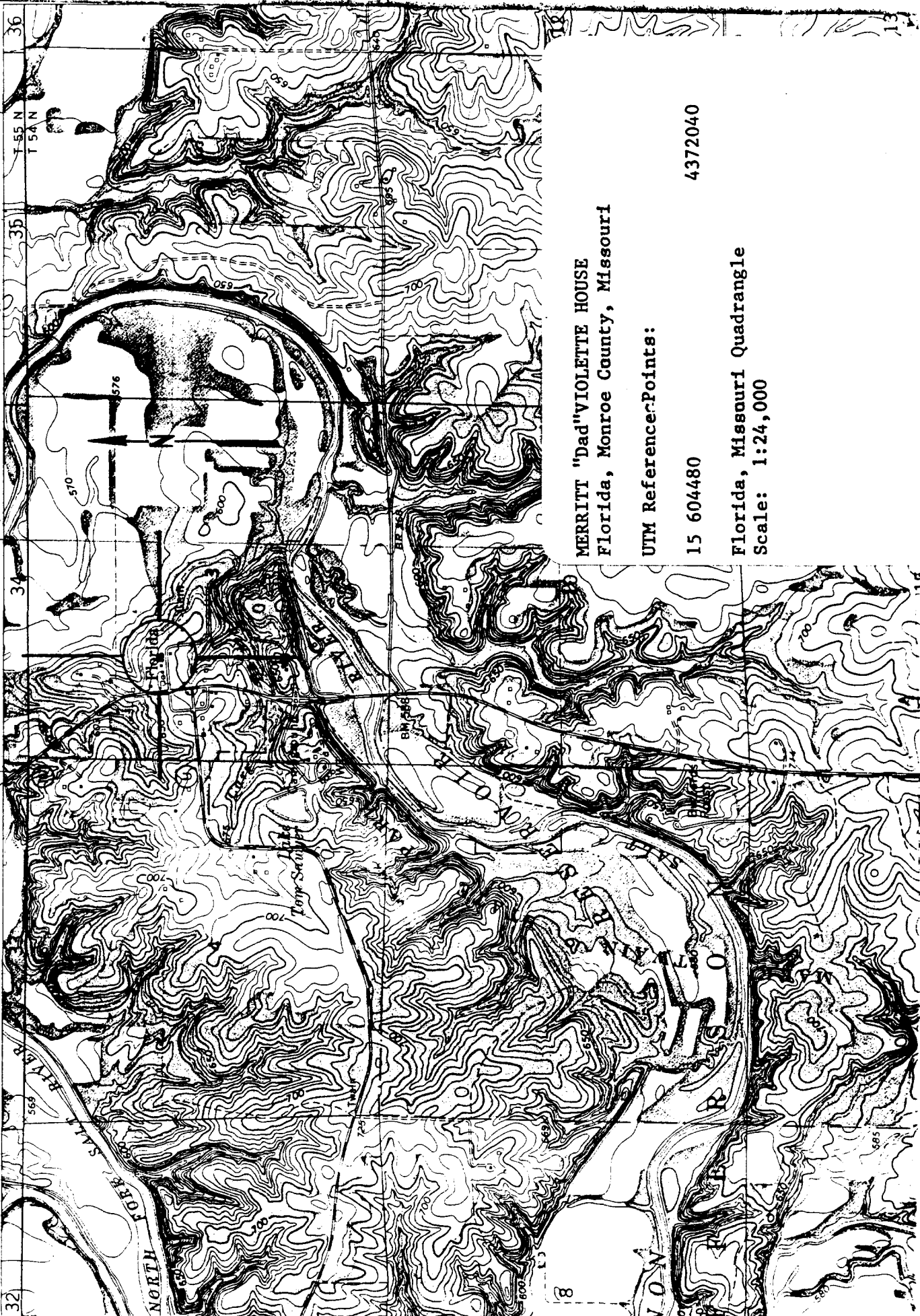
FOOTNOTES

1. Ralph Gregory, M. A. "Dad" Violette, a Life Sketch (Florida, Mo.: 1969), p. 1. This publication is the main source on which subsequent studies have relied.
2. The Perry Enterprise "'Dad' Violette Dies at Florida", Vol. 44, No. 27 (Feb. 5, 1931).
3. "Merritt A. Violette House" (Historic American Buildings Survey, 1978), p. 1.



FLORIDA QUADRANGLE  
MISSOURI—MONROE CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
NE 1/4 FLORIDA 15' QUADRANGLE

7663 III SE (STOUTSVILLE) 6 MI. TO U.S. 24 47' 30" 903 905 91° 32' 35' 36'



MERRITT "Dad" VIOLETTE HOUSE  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

UTM Reference Points:

15 604480

4372040

Florida, Missouri Quadrangle  
Scale: 1:24,000

VIOLETTE, MERRITT, HOUSE

COUNTY:

Monroe

LOCATION:

Florida vicinity

OWNER:

Mr. & Mrs. Delbert Hartley  
31 Luther, Hannibal, Mo. 63401

DATE APPROVED BY A.C.:

April 19, 1983

DATE SENT TO D.C.:

August 2, 1983

DATE OF REC. IN D.C.:

August 4, 1983

DATE PLACED ON NATIONAL REGISTER:

September 8, 1983

DATE CERTIFICATE AWARDED  
(AND PRESENTOR):

DATE FILE REVIEWED:

The Merrit "Dad" Violette House is significant as the home of a man who contributed greatly to the development of this area of the state; who saved Mark Twain's birthplace for the nation and instigated the Mark Twain State Park; and who built two camps for the Camp Fire Girls at his own expense. Architecturally, the house is one of the few turn-of-the-century houses in the area, constructed from an original design and by a woman.

MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE # 1 of 6  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

Photographer: Debbie Hartley Johnson

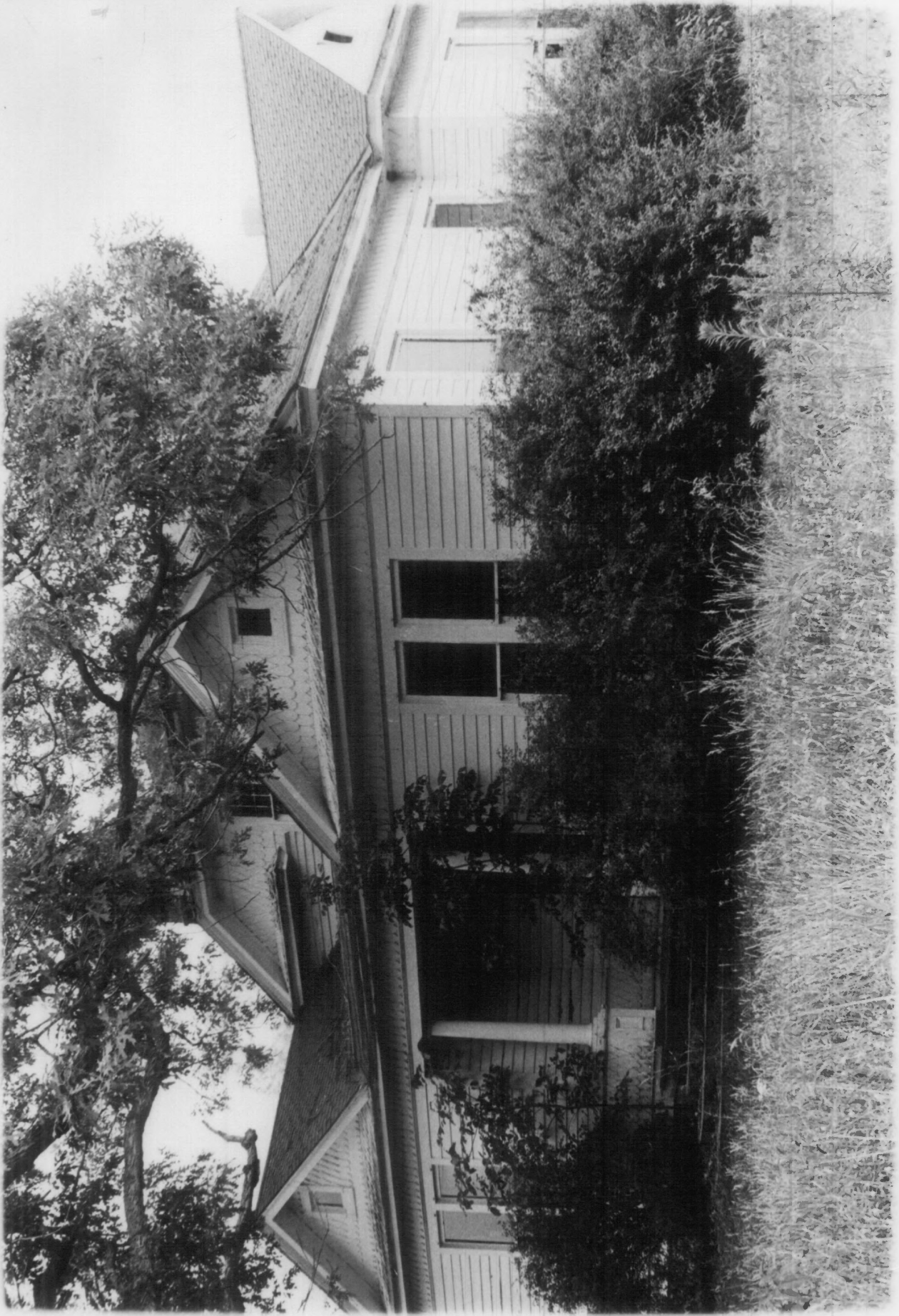
Date: June, 1980

Neg. Loc: Arleen and Orland Yates

Rural Route  
Stoutsville, Missouri

View looking east as the building appeared  
before move.

CKS



MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE # 2 of 6  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

Photographer: Debbie Hartley Johnson

Date: May, 1981

Neg. Loc: Arleen and Orland Yates  
Rural Route  
Stoutsville, Missouri

MO.

view looking north, finished front with  
curved steps replaced as in the original.

L





MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE # 3 of 6  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

Photographer: Lloyd Fielder

Date: May, 1981

Neg. Loc: Arleen and Orland Yates  
Rural Route  
Stoutsville, Missouri

View of the central hall looking north.

1983

30 ft.





MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE # 4 of 6  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

Photographer: Lloyd Fielder

Date: May, 1981

VC.

Neg. Loc: Arleen and Orland Yates  
Rural Route  
Stoutsville, Missouri

View of the mantle in the great room looking  
north.

CON ,  
GREAT



MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE # 5 of 6  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

Photographer: Debbie Hartley Johnson  
Date: May, 1981  
Neg. Loc: Arleen and Orland Yates  
Rural Route  
Stoutsville, Missouri

view of the dining room, looking south.



MERRITT "DAD" VIOLETTE HOUSE #6 of 6  
Florida, Monroe County, Missouri

Photographer: Debbie Hartley Johnson

Date: May, 1981

Neg. Loc: Arleen and Orland Yates

Rural Route  
Stoutsville, Missouri

View looking west of the dining room showing  
bull's-eye block decorated window moldings.

100110





County: Monroe County  
Site Name: Alexander Violette House  
Site Number: 23 MN HR170  
Location of Site: Florida, Missouri  
View of Photo: Michael Weichman  
Photographer: SHP0-Jefferson City  
Location of Neg: 8 June 1982  
Date of Photo: 8 June 1982

## FILE: INVENTORY





DEBRIEF PHOTOGRAPH HOUSE  
HARRIS, MO.

PHOTOS. DEBBIE HARTLEY JOHNSON

NEL. ICC. ARLEN AND ORLAND YATES  
RURAL ROUTE, STOUTSVILLE, MO.

JOYCE AND DELBERT HARTLEY SLEUTHS?

HANNIBAL, MO. 62401

VIEW THE INS CONDITION OF HOUSE PRIOR TO  
SCRAPING AND PAINTING OF HOUSE

MERRITT VIOLETTE HOUSE

FLORIDA, MO.

PHOTOG. DEBBIE HARTLEY JOHNSON

NEG. LOC. ARLEEN AND ORLAND YATES  
RURAL ROUTE, STOUTSVILLE, MO.

JOYCE AND DELBERT HARTLEY 311 LUTHER

HANNIBAL, MO. 63401

view showing condition of house prior to

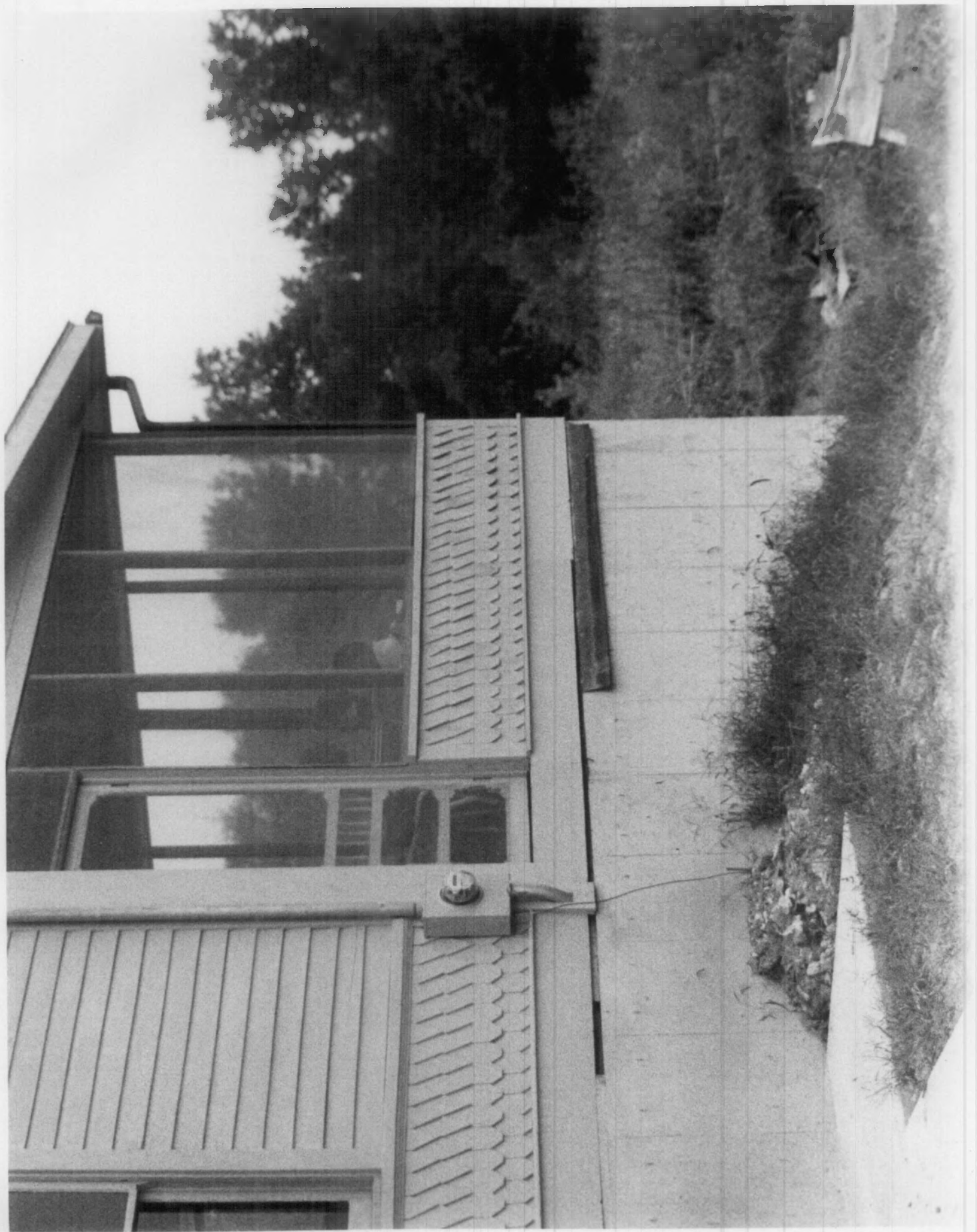
scraping and painting of house



MERRITT VIOLETTE HOUSE  
FLORIDA, MO.

PHOTOG. C. DEBBIE HARTLY JOHNSON  
NEG. LOG. — ARLEEN AND ORLAND YATES  
RURAL ROUTE, STOUTSVILLE, MO.  
JOYCE AND DELBERT HARTLEY  
31 LUTHER LANE  
HANNIBAL, MO. 63401

view--shows elevation of new ~~entr~~ porch,  
also the new matched lower part of  
porch in rough--finished in 1983



MERRITT VIOLETTE HPUSE

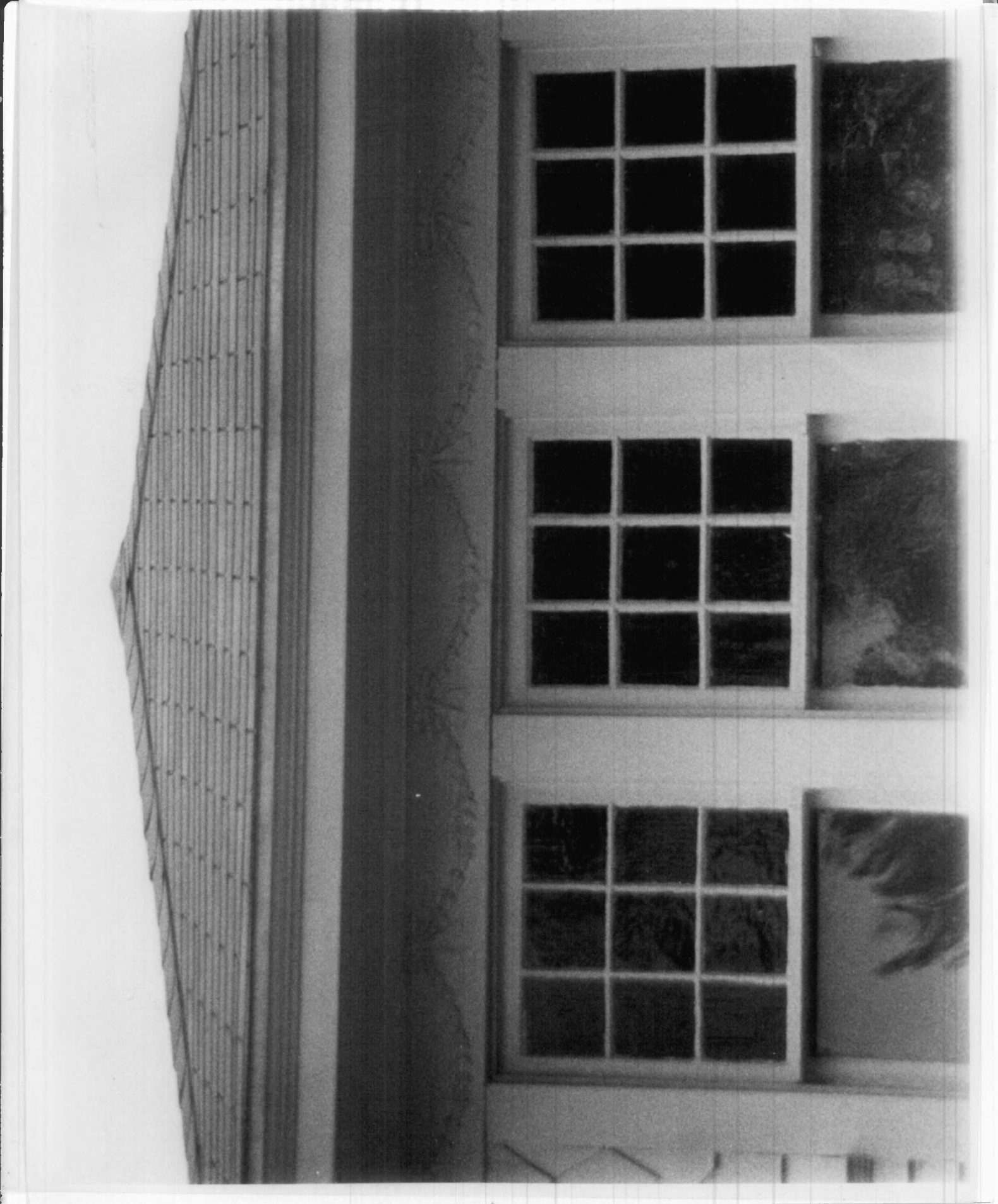
FLORIDA, MQ.

PHOTOG.--- ARLEEN AND ORLAND YATES  
RURAL ROUTE, STOUTSVILLE, MO.  
JOYCE AND DELBERT HARTLEY  
31 LUTHER LANE HANNIBAL, MO. 63401

VIEW--- CARVED GARLAND ABOVE FRONT WINDOWS  
UPPER WINDOWS ARE BLUE, GOLD AND VIOLET  
STAINED GLASS

SAME WINDOWS AT BACK OF HOUSE---NO  
GARLAND IN BACK OF HOUSE







MERRITT VIOLETTE HOUSE

FLORIDA, MO.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DEBBIE HARTLEY JOHNSON

NE. LOC. ARLEEN AND ORLAND YATES  
RURAL ROUTE, STOUTSVILLE, MO.

JOYCE AND DELBERT HARTLEY

311 LUTHER LANE

HANNIBAL, MO. 63401

VIEW NEW PORCH OVERLOOKING MARK TWAIN LAKE

AS FAR AS SEVEN MILES MAY BE VIEWED

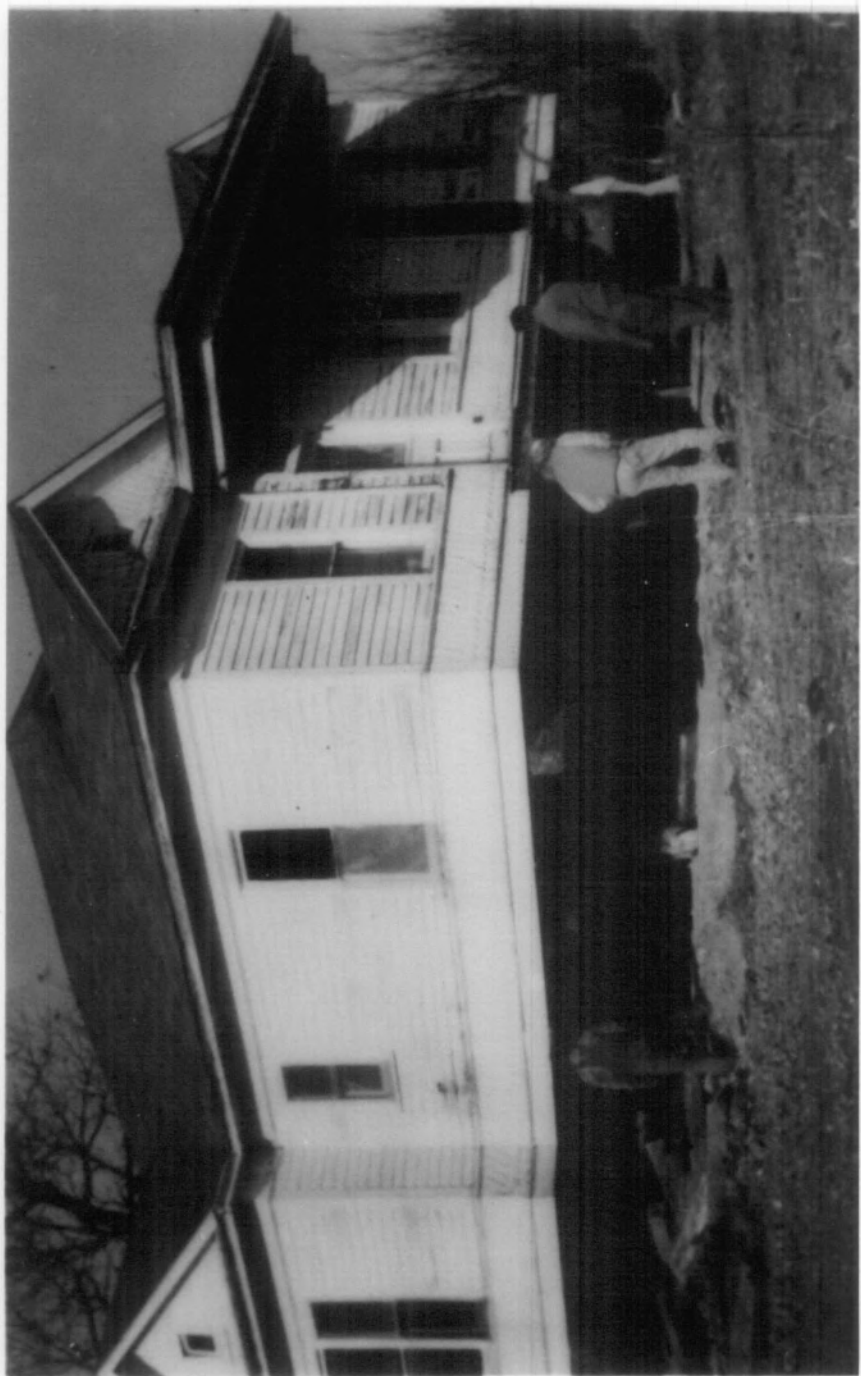


MERRITT VIOLETTE HOUSE  
FLORIDA, MO.

PHOTOG.--DELBERT HARTLEY  
NEG. LOCATION\_ ARLEEN AND ORLAND YATES  
RURAL ROUTE, STOUTSVILLE, MO.

JOYCE AND DELBERT HARTLEY  
31 LUTHER LANE  
HANNIBAL, MO. 63401

VIEW-- HOUSE UP ON BEAMS AND DOLLIES  
READY TO BE MOVED BY TWO CATER  
PILLARS



EXTRA  
PHOTOS

Violette, Merritt House  
Florida Vicinity, Monroe County  
View from Front  
Extra Photographs

1983/MN001/NR

Violette, Merritt House  
Florida Vicinity, Monroe County  
Side View  
Extra Photographs

1983/MN001/NR





Violette, Merritt House  
Florida Vicinity, Monroe County  
Rear Quarter View  
Extra Photographs

1983/MN001/NR

Violette, Merritt House  
Florida Vicinity, Monroe County  
Rearview  
Extra Photograph

1983/MN001/NR



